

Adopt a Dog

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Your guide to adopting a dog from an animal shelter

You have decided to adopt one of the millions of dogs waiting for a home. The big concern now is how to get ready for your new arrival. Here are some tips to make the transition more enjoyable.

1. Get Your Home Ready

Dog proofing your home is important and can be life-saving. This includes making sure that there are no toxins such as rat poison, slug bait or antifreeze accessible to your new dog. Make sure trash is secure. Pick up clothing and small toys or other objects that may be accidentally ingested by the new dog.

2. Get Your Supplies

Make a list of things you need for your new dog. Bedding, food and water dishes, food (check what he has been eating to start with), treats, crate, safe toys, toothbrush and paste, leash, collar, grooming supplies, and any pet-specific cleaners.

3. Plan for the “What If”

Prepare your medicine cabinet for an emergency. Make a first aid kit. You never know when an emergency may happen. Items should include emergency veterinary phone numbers, tweezers, gloves, gauze, tape, thermometer, hydrogen peroxide, sterile eye wash, antiseptic and antibiotic ointment.

4. Plan the Right Time

Make sure you have time to spend with your dog when he first arrives at your home. Friday is often a good day to bring your pet home – the two of you have the entire weekend to get to know each other.

5. Have a Family Discussion

Discuss how the dog will be cared for, trained and develop general “House Rules.” Care includes feeding, grooming, exercising and walking. When will this be done? Who will do it? Training is a very important issue to discuss as a family. What are the house rules for your dog? It is best to decide as a group upfront.

6. Get His History

When you pick your new dog, obtain as much history as you can. This will come in use later if problems arise and to know what he needs. Ask questions that include:

- How long the dog has been at the shelter?
- Where did she/he come from?
- Birthdate if known or approximate age.
- How big were the parents and is anything known about them?
- Has he had any vaccinations?



7. Home

Spend quality time with him. Make sure you place a leash and collar on him. Leash walks only for a couple days. Don't let your dog run unrestricted. Notice appetite, urinations, and bowel movement for abnormalities. Call your veterinarian if you have concerns.

8. Dog Introductions

Slowly and carefully introduce him to your other dogs. Let them smell each other under the door. Gradually, let them see each other from the door crack and eventually let them meet. Do this supervised.

9. See Your Veterinarian

Follow-up within the next week for a check up and anything else your dog needs. Ensure your dog is tested and place him on this monthly preventative. Some new monthly heartworm medications are combined with preventive flea medications.

10. Train, Train, Train

Dogs especially like to learn and understand what is expecting of them. You may not want a dog that can do tricks but at the minimum training to “come,” “leave it,” “stay” has saved many lives. Sign up for classes at your local shelter or veterinary hospital.

Lastly, don't forget lots of love and attention.

